

In the Claims:

1. (previously presented) A method of receiving data transmitted by modulating a carrier, the method having the steps of coherently matching the received modulated carrier to a reference signal, the reference signal having phase or polarization slip relative to the carrier, to generate a set of detected data signals which have a mutual relationship and are each associated with a differing state of the slip between the reference signal and the carrier,

determining which of the set of detected signals is associated with a current state of the slip, and

based on this determination, selecting, as a current output, at least one of the set of detected signals.

2. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of determining comprises determining which of the set of signals is most closely matched to a property of the reference signal.

3. (previously presented) A method according to claim 2 wherein the property is phase and the step of determining comprises determining which of the set of signals is most closely aligned to the phase of the reference signal.

4. (previously presented) A method according to claim 3, wherein the property is phase, wherein there is an in-phase datum representing the phase of the reference signal and an anti-phase datum, and wherein the step of determining comprises determining which of the set of signals is most closely matched in phase to the in-phase datum or anti-phase datum.

5. (currently amended) A method according to claim 4 wherein, if it is determined that the ~~optimum~~ selected signal is most closely matched to the anti-phase datum, the method further comprises the step of inverting the selected signal.

6. (original) A method according to claim 4 wherein the step of determining which of the set of signals is most closely matched in phase to the in-phase datum or anti-phase datum comprises determining which of the

set of input signals has the greatest amplitude.

7. (original) A method according to claim 4 wherein the step of determining which of the set of signals is most closely matched in phase to the in-phase datum or anti-phase datum comprises determining which of the set of input signals has the smallest amplitude and determining, from the mutual relationship of the set of signals, which of the remainder of the set of signals has the greatest amplitude.

8. (original) A method according to claim 4 wherein the step of determining which of the set of signals is most closely matched in phase to the in-phase datum or anti-phase datum comprises determining which of the set of input signals is changing sense and determining, from the mutual relationship of the set of signals, which of the remainder of the set of signals has the greatest amplitude.

9. (original) A method according to claim 6 wherein the step of determining which of the set of input signals has the greatest amplitude compares each signal to a threshold which is a function of the reference signal.

10. (original) A method according to claim 4 wherein the step of determining which of the set of signals is most closely matched in phase to the in-phase datum or anti-phase datum comprises comparing pairs of the set of signals.

11. (original) A method according to claim 10 further comprising filtering the outputs of the comparisons whereby to average the comparisons over a period of time.

12. (original) A method according to claim 10 wherein the step of comparing pairs of the set of signals comprises cross-correlating pairs of the set of signals.

13. (original) A method according to claim 12 further comprising determining which of the set of signals appears in the correlations having the

greatest value.

14. (original) A method according to claim 12 further comprising determining which of the set of signals is anti-correlated with the other signals.

15. (original) A method according to claim 12 further comprising filtering the outputs of the correlations whereby to average the correlations over a period of time.

16. (original) A method according to claim 10 wherein the comparisons are performed on digital versions of the set of signals.

17. (original) A method according to claim 16 wherein the digital versions of the set of signals are regenerated signals.

18. (original) A method according to claim 16 further comprising time-averaging the results of the comparisons and comparing each of a set of time-averaged comparisons with a decision threshold.

19. (original) A method according to claim 18 wherein the decision threshold is representative of a mean level between binary levels of the digital signals.

20. (original) A method according to claim 16 further comprising determining which comparison, from the set of comparisons, has an output different from the others, this being indicative of the pair of set signals contributing to that comparison not being most closely matched to the reference signal.

21. (original) A method according to claim 16 wherein the set of signals comprise M signals which are derived from an input signal which is modulated by an N -phase modulation scheme ($M > N$), the method further comprising determining, from the comparisons, which $N/2$ of the set of M signals have the lowest cross-correlation between them.

22. (original) A method according to claim 21 wherein, if more than $N/2$ possible signals are identified as having the lowest cross-correlation between

them, the method further comprises selecting the $N/2$ signals which are most equally spaced in phase, or phase and polarization.

23. (currently amended) A method according to claim ~~[[15]]~~ 16 wherein the step of comparing the digital versions of the signals comprises comparing pairs of signals using XOR gates.

24. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of determining occurs in a processing path which is in parallel to a main path and wherein the step of selecting comprises delaying the set of input signals in the main path whereby to compensate for the delay introduced by the processing path.

25. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the mutual relationship of the set of detected signals is a phase-shifted relationship.

26. (currently amended) A method according to claim 25 wherein the set of detected signals are electrical signals which have been derived from optical signals received by an optical front end ~~to the~~ of a receiver in which the method is performed.

27. (previously presented) A method according to claim 25 wherein the set of detected signals are substantially equally spaced in phase, or phase and polarization.

28. (currently amended) A method according to claim 1 further comprising deriving clock timing for the processing ~~determining~~ determining from at least one of the set of detected signals.

29. (original) A method according to claim 28 comprising deriving clock timing for the processing from an average taken across all of the set of signals.

30. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1 further comprising making the step of selecting an output in synchronism with a level change in one or more of the set of detected signals.

31. (original) A method according to claim 1 further comprising processing the set of signals to determine which of the set of signals has an alternative predetermined association with the reference signal and selecting, as a further optimum output, the signal which meets the alternative predetermined association.

32. (previously presented) A method according to claim 1 having the step of generating a second set of signals each associated with a differing state of the coherence between the reference signal and the carrier, the method further comprising processing the second set of signals to determine which of the second set of signals is associated with a current state of the coherence and selecting, as a second output, the signal of the second set which is determined to be associated.

33. (previously presented) A method according to claim 32 wherein the set of detected signals and the second set of signals in quadrature and the step of determining the signals uses signals of both sets.

34. (previously presented) A method according to claim 32 wherein the steps of selecting an output and selecting a second output are synchronised.

35. (previously presented) A method of processing a signal in a communications system, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a modulated carrier signal from a transmission path;

generating a set of mutually related detection signals representing detections of the modulations for different amounts of phase or polarization slip by applying the received signal and a reference signal to a coupling network, the reference signal having phase or polarization slip relative to the carrier,

processing the set of signals to determine which of the set of signals is associated with a current state of the slip and,

based on this determination, selecting, as a current output, at least one of the set of detected signals.

36. (previously presented) A coherent receiver which is arranged to receive a signal from a transmission path, the receiver being arranged to coherently match the received modulated carrier and a reference signal, the reference signal having phase or polarization slip relative to the carrier, and to generate a set of mutually related signals, each associated with a differing state of the slip between the reference signal and the carrier,

a processing stage which is arranged to process the set of signals to determine which of the set of signals is associated with a current state of the slip between the reference signal and the carrier and based on this determination, select as a current output, at least one of the set of detected signals.

37. (previously presented) A coherent receiver arrangement comprising:

a first input port for receiving an input signal having data transmitted by modulating a carrier from a transmission path;

a second input port for receiving a reference signal, the reference signal having phase or polarization slip relative to the carrier;

a coupling network which is operable to coherently match the input signal and the reference signal to generate a set of mutually related signals,

a processing stage which is arranged to process the set of signals to determine which of the set of signals is associated with a current state of the slip between the reference signal and the carrier and based on this determination, select as a current output, at least one of the set of detected signals.

38. (original) A communications network incorporating a receiver according to claim 37.

39. (cancelled)